

# Preparing for the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT)

**Concepts and terminology related to Language,  
language use and the Background to Language  
Learning and Teaching**

**Factors in the language learning process. Learner characteristics.**

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# Contents

**Module 1. Language and background to language learning and teaching. Factors in the language learning process.**

**Part 2 – Background to Language Learning**

Unit 13 Learner characteristics.

Section 1 Common Learning Styles and Preferences.

Section 2 Common Learning Strategies.

Section 3 Maturity.

Section 4 Past Language Learning Experiences.

Section 5 How Learner characteristics affect Learning.

Section 6 Practice: Identifying Learning Characteristics.

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# Section 1 Common Learning Styles and Preferences

**Preparing for the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) of Cambridge University ESOL Examinations. Module 1. Language and background to language learning and teaching. Part 2. Background to Language Learning. Factors in the language process. Learners characteristics.**

**The types of Learner Characteristics. Common Learning Styles and Preferences.**

**Learning styles** are habitual patterns of perceiving, processing, or reacting to information. A wide spectrum of individual preferences in ways of learning (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, etc.). According to many authors learning styles are defined as “an individual’s natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills” (Reid, 1995, p. vii); thus, they are “broad preferences for going about the business of learning” (Ehrman, 1996, p. 49). They are ways in which a person goes about learning a person’s preferred or most used mode for obtaining information. Learning takes place through auditory, visual, verbal, visual-motor, and other channels. In recent years, educators have seen some controversy arise over the issue of learning styles. Willingham (2009) and other critics argue that there doesn't seem to be much evidence that children and young adults learn in fundamentally different ways. In fact, in a September 2009 posting on the *Washington Post* website, Willingham called learning styles “bunk.” This is a remarkable conclusion that flies in the face of what people know intuitively about learning and what educators have learned from observing our students in the classroom. In his book *Why don't students like school?* (2009), Daniel Willingham asserts that there is no neuroscience research that supports the use of learning styles in schools. This may be true. But there is also no neuroscience research that establishes the influences of temperament or personality on learning. However, for hundreds of years, teachers have known from experience how powerful these influences can be. There is no question that certain approaches to learning work better for some children than for others. No one, to our knowledge, is suggesting that we use a learning style inventory to pigeonhole children, and no one is suggesting that children's learning style proclivities may not change from situation to situation. The reality, as we see it, is simply that because many children find learning to be a struggle, teachers are obliged to do what they can to make it easier. Being aware of learning style preferences and building them into instructional planning is one way to do this. In the next tables we will face the next learning styles: *auditory learner, amusing learner, analytical learner, creative learner, cooperative learner, dramatic learner, group learner, individual learner, inductive learner, deductive learner, impulsive learner, kinaesthetic learner, reflexive learner, real learner, serious learner, visual learner, verbalists learner, levelers learner, sharpener learner, random learner, sequential learner, synthesizers & analyzers.*

## Common Learning Styles.

Type of Learner	Definition	Example/s
<b>Auditory</b>	<p>Auditory learners acquire new information through sound; they hear grammatical endings, and they associate new words with sounds they already know. Even pitch, tempo, and intonation provide them with clues to the meaning of what they are hearing, and they are very quick to learn to make these differences when they are speaking the foreign language. Other people might respond to information which is heard: dialogues, songs, rhythm, etc. 'I hear what you are saying. Leaver (1998) divides auditory learners into two groups: <i>aural learners</i> and <i>oral learners</i>. <b>Aural learners</b> learn by listening to others. They tend not to take notes in class because they usually remember what they hear. They are usually pretty good at listening comprehension tasks; can figure out either the essence of broadcasts and films or the details contained in them – or both, depending on their learning style; and have generally pretty good accents. Oral learners learn by listening to themselves.</p> <p><b>Oral learners</b>, then, like to talk. Talking and hearing themselves talk is often essential to their ability to comprehend information and store it in memory. Whereas aural learners need auditory <i>input</i>, oral learners need auditory <i>output</i>, which becomes their input. Simply put, they get to learn by hearing when they hear themselves speak. As classmates, they can be perceived to be interruptive because they talk “all the time.”</p>	<p>This kind of learner might respond to information which is heard: dialogues, songs, rhythm, etc. 'I hear what you are saying.'</p>

	However, if they were to stop talking, the quantity and quality of their learning would diminish.	
<b>Amusing</b>	This kind of learner can concentrate better if there is an element of humour and lightness in the experience.	'I like a good laugh.' 'Don't take it all so seriously.'
<b>Analytical</b>	This kind of learner like to analyse language forms, looking for rules. Having understood the 'bricks' of the language then they might feel able, tentatively, to use them. Some people like to analyse language forms, looking for rules. Having understood the 'bricks' of the language then they might feel able, tentatively, to use them.	'Let's stop messing about and get down to the basic rules.'
<b>Creative</b>	This kind of learner need to use the language creatively even from the beginning.	'Let's have a go.'
<b>Cooperative</b>	This kind of learner like to work with others.	'It's really good fun to work with other people.'
<b>Dramatic</b>	This kind of learner experience and absorb language associated with drama and storytelling.	'I love a good story.'
<b>Group</b>	This kind of learner prefer to work by groups.	
<b>Individual</b>	This kind of learner prefer to work by themselves.	'I like to be left alone to get on with it.'
<b>Inductive</b>	Inductive learners form hypotheses, then test them. They may only rarely seek teacher support. They enjoy seeing a multitude of examples and intuiting what the rule should be and sometimes cannot get enough examples during class.	
<b>Deductive</b>	Deductive learners study the rules, then practice applying them to examples. They prefer to get these rules either from the teacher or from references. Like sequential processing, deductive processing can save some cognitive load (the amount of material the brain is	

	expected to process simultaneously) because the learner does not need to work out the rules.	
<b>Impulsive</b>	Impulsive learners think and respond nearly simultaneously. They tend to complete their work more quickly but often with less accuracy than reflective learners. They often give facile answers.	
<b>Kinaesthetic</b>	Motor learning is sometimes called kinaesthetic learning. While the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, doing so does not represent an accurate description of learning style information. Kinaesthetic preferences are only one kind of motor learning. Others might need to move and to touch in order to learn efficiently. <i>'I've put it together, at last.'</i> Quite obviously, given the terminology, motor learners acquire new information through movement. The differences among motor learners, according to Leaver (1998), are based on the kinds of muscles being used: gross motor muscles (arms, legs, or whole body) or fine motor muscles (fingers or hands). This kind of learner might need to move and to touch in order to learn efficiently.	
<b>Reflexive</b>	<i>Reflective</i> or <i>reflexive</i> learners think, then respond. They tend to show more involved and deeper levels of thinking. <i>Reflective learners</i> more often than not work accurately, but their slowness sometimes means that work is incomplete.	
<b>Real</b>	This kind of learner prefer to deal with real examples from everyday experience.	<i>'I want to prepare for the real world.'</i>



<b>Serious</b>	This kind of learner can concentrate better if the approach is serious.	'I don't want to mess about, but get down to the real business of learning.'
<b>Visual</b>	<p>Visual learners acquire new vocabulary primarily through sight; they understand grammar better when they can read about it in a book. Some people respond best of all to information which is seen: pictures, writing, diagrams, etc. Note also: colour, size, design, etc. <i>'I see what you mean.'</i> There are two kinds of visual learners: <i>imagists and verbalists</i>. When <i>imagists</i> hear or read something in a foreign language (or in their native language, for that matter), they see a picture of what they have heard or read. <i>Verbalists</i>, on the other hand, see words. <i>Verbalists</i> store the letters, and when they have difficulty remembering a word, they can usually remember the initial letter or some of the letters in it. They do not associate the word with an image but with the letters that compose it. For <i>verbalists</i>, reading is a key to remembering – much more so than with <i>imagists</i>.</p> <p><i>Verbalists</i>, not surprisingly, are much better at correct spelling (and very likely the winners of most spelling bees are verbalists or people who have learned the kinds of memory strategies that come naturally to verbalists).</p>	This kind of learner respond best of all to information which is seen: pictures, writing, diagrams, etc. Note also: colour, size, design, etc. <i>'I see what you mean.'</i>
<b>Levelers</b>	When learning new information, levelers meld together information that may be distinctly different and come from a number of sources. Therefore, when it comes time to retrieve specifics, the details of the pieces that formed the melded concept are no longer available to the learner (Lowery, 1982). Levelers remove distinctions instinctively; frequently they see only similarities. Levelers tend to notice the patterns in the language and,	



	thereby, “see” the underlying linguistic system. Both approaches are useful for language learning, and sharpeners can teach levelers some of their strategies and vice versa to good avail.	
<b>Sharpeners</b>	Sharpeners look for distinctions among items. Everything that we said about levelers can be reversed for sharpeners. They readily retrieve details because they store them in different “compartments.” They do notice differences, and they write well when the assignment allows them to use their tendency to notice and describe differences. Sharpeners often naturally notice and remember the subtle distinctions of form and meaning that characterize native-like language, especially if they have high language aptitude or previous language-learning experience.	
<b>Random</b>	Random learners generally prefer to develop their own approach to language learning and organize assignments in their own way, often completing them in no apparent (to the outsider) order. (Likewise, in reading a novel, many random learners report reading the ending first or skipping out in the book. Extreme random learners have sometimes reported even reading the ending of a mystery before reading the story itself.). The World Wide Web is a random learner’s paradise.	
<b>Sequential</b>	Sequential learners generally prefer to receive materials that have been organized in some fashion: a syllabus, lesson plan, or programmed tutorial. While they may	

	<p>adjust the organization to fit their own needs, these learners tend to feel uncomfortable when handed a collection of authentic materials with no guidance on what to do or how to use them. (In reading a novel, most sequential learners report that they prefer to start on the first page and read the subsequent pages in order; they generally do not understand why anyone would want to read the end of a mystery before reading the story itself.). A sequential learner may be daunted by the mass of input from the World Wide Web; in this case, might ask the teacher to give some questions to think about in advance before go online, so can use sequential style to advantage. On the other hand, unlike random learners, may be very happy to have a textbook in hands, especially one that explains everything in a step-by-step manner.</p>	
<b>Synthesizers</b>	<p><i>Synthesizers</i> assemble something new (knowledge, models, stories, ideas, etc.) from known information. They do this by using the given pieces to build new wholes, e.g. making up new words, using typical roots and prefixes or rewriting a paragraph from a different point of view, using the sentences already there as models. Synthesizers typically put together disparate ideas easily and not only make sense out of them but also develop new models with them.</p> <p>Synthesis as a learning style has several characteristics: (1) hypothesis formation is experienced or intuited; (2) processing is unconscious; (3) process and product are</p>	

	simultaneous; and (4) the synthesizing learner goes from insight to construct.	
<b>Analyzers</b>	<i>Analyzers</i> disassemble known information into its component parts and are usually aware that the “big picture” is composed of small pieces. They like rules because they can break them down into component parts and use them to explain phenomena. They like word study because they can break the words into etymological pieces: roots, stems, affixes. Analysis as a learning style has several characteristics: (1) hypothesis formation is built up consciously; (2) processing involves discrete steps (setting up the hypothesis, looking at components, and organizing them); (3) process and product are experienced as consecutive; and (4) the analytic learner goes from construct to insight.	

Learning Style	Task
Auditory	Make lists, find out information
Visual	Make drawings, diagrams, use DVD, computer programs
Kinaesthetic	Arrange visits, activities, field trips
Persistent	Lengthy tasks, problem-solving activities
Global	Provide overview, short tasks, frequent breaks, discussion
Social	Work in groups, in pairs, discussion
Metacognitive	Problem solving, thinking skills
Tactile	Hands-on, model making, demonstration

Examples of tasks for different learning styles.

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### The types of Learner Characteristics. Common Learning Styles and Preferences.

#### Learning Preferences.

*Learning preferences include interests, intelligence preferences, learning styles, production styles, and environmental influences.*

Although identifying and sorting student learning preferences may seem time-consuming, the dividends your students will reap should more than compensate. Having a student lie on the floor to read his book rather than sit in a chair, letting a student explore the concept of life cycles through her passion for beetles, assigning a drawing rather than a writing project to an artistic student—these small modifications can make big differences in the learning that takes place.

**Interests.** There is a considerable research base to support a strong correlation between the degree of student interest and levels of student motivation, achievement, productivity, and perseverance (Amabile, 1983; Torrance, 1995). Csikszentmihalyi and colleagues (1993) have found that student interest is as critical to talent development as the match between task complexity and student readiness for the task. According to Glasser (1988), students who are interested in what they are learning are motivated to pursue learning experiences of ever-increasing complexity and difficulty. There is also a significant correlation between students' interest in the learning content and their willingness to persevere in learning tasks that are momentarily not interesting.

Another important correlation to emerge from the research on student interest and choice is that students who are engaged in work that interested them were overwhelmingly more able to see connections between their present work in school and their future academic or career goals. These connections form the foundation of commitment to future learning and foster self-directedness (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993).

There are two types of student interests useful in planning for personalized learning. *Pre-existing student interests* are those subjects, topics, and pursuits about which an individual student has an existing curiosity or passion. They may be interests explored at school (areas of the curriculum, extracurricular activities, or athletics) or outside interests in which the student readily invests time and energy. Relevance to the student is obvious and engagement is immediate. *Potential interests* are topics, activities, or pursuits that the student may not have yet discovered or been exposed to, but that may prove to be ongoing. Potential interests are as powerful as pre-existing interests, but a teacher needs to mediate their relevance for the student.

Effective teachers pay attention to both pre-existing and potential interests. Whenever you can link the classroom curriculum to student interest, you tap into internalized achievement motivation—where goals are personal, motivation comes from within, and achievement is deeply meaningful.

Mediating connections between classroom learning and student interests is one of the most powerful strategies that teachers can employ toward the goal of creating enthusiastic lifelong learners.

During a unit on religious knowledge in our IB Theory of Knowledge class, we asked the students to write about how they personally came to knowledge through faith. Both Jorgen, a militant atheist from Sweden, and Samir, a devout Jordanian Muslim of Palestinian extraction, wrote particularly well-organized, articulate essays. As a follow-up, we asked the class to undertake a self-analysis of their arguments for "confirmation bias"—the tendency all of us have to perceive only that which confirms our pre-existing ideas and prejudices. A rich and respectful discussion ensued, with Jorgen and Samir—both fascinated by God but taking polar-opposite positions—driving the conversation. It was a vivid example of how student interest can support deep, critical thinking.

**Intelligence preferences.** General consensus in education today is that intelligence is not monolithic but made up of many elements. Educators also view it as malleable, subject to a wide variety of influences (Nisbett, 2009). Howard Gardner's (1993) model of intelligence, identifying eight specific types of intelligence, has been popular with teachers, but many who find it fascinating intellectually also find it cumbersome to apply to classroom instruction. Gardner himself is quick to point out that his theory was never designed for classroom use.

Teachers may find Robert Sternberg's (1985) framework of intelligence preferences easier to use. Sternberg proposes three intelligence types: *analytical, practical, and creative*.

- *Analytical intelligence* is the intelligence most often recognized and rewarded in schools. Students with strengths in this area learn well with traditional school tasks such as organizing information, perceiving cause and effect, logical analysis, note taking, and predicting implications.
- *Practical intelligence* is about relevance. Students with strengths in this area need to solve problems in a meaningful context. Their learning is supported when teachers offer connections with the real world outside the classroom. These students need to see concepts and skills at work.
- *Creative intelligence* involves approaching ideas and problems in fresh and sometimes surprising ways. Students with strong creative intelligence are often divergent thinkers, preferring to experiment with ideas rather than "work" like everyone else. All people have and use all three intelligences, but we vary in particular preferences and in combination of preferences. These preferences may be shaped by "brain wiring," culture, gender, and personal experiences. It makes sense for teachers to support students as they develop their intelligence strengths while providing opportunities to expand their nonpreferred areas.



Sternberg's model has been well substantiated by research studies of students from primary school through university level. His findings suggest that students can make significant gains when teachers both permit them to explore ideas using their preferred intelligences and teach regularly in all three modes, which deepens student understanding and enhances retention.





*Modality preferences* refer to a student's preferred mode of taking in information—visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or tactual. Each of us uses all four modalities when we learn, but in different combinations of preference. The largest proportion of the population tends to prefer visual learning; these are students who greatly benefit from a graphic display of the material to be learned. The next-largest groups are those who prefer kinesthetic and tactual learning experiences. (Several of our special education colleagues from schools around the world have observed that a significant number of boys with learning disabilities have a preference for kinesthetic learning; ironically, these are the same students teachers often require to sit still for long periods of time.) The smallest proportion of the population tends to prefer auditory learning. That auditory learners are a minority in our classrooms is significant, given our proclivity as teachers to fill the classroom with teacher talk. Each modality preference may present challenges to learning, but each also offers opportunities for personalizing and ought to be considered during instructional planning. Figure 1.1 lists some activities that may be problematic or helpful for each type of learner.



**Figure 2. Personalizing for Learning Modality Preference.**

LEARNING CHALLENGE		LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES
KINESTHETIC LEARNERS MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY		KINESTHETIC LEARNERS MAY ENJOY
Sitting still and completing solo tasks , Listening, Spacing letters in handwriting, Interpreting nonverbal communications, Interacting positively with peers , Problem solving, Controlling impulses, Writing legibly in cursive, Spelling, particularly if instruction involves a phonetic approach , Recalling what was seen or heard, Recalling visual images , Expressing emotions without physical movement and gestures , Sticking with one activity for long periods .		Activities that involve movement, Large motor skill activities , Art activities requiring physical movement, such as sculpture and woodworking Field trips that involve physical activity, Real-life experiences , Dramatic activities, role-play, Dance and sports , Physical relaxation exercises Frequent changes of learning groups , Hands-on activities, working with manipulatives .
TACTUAL LEARNERS MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY		TACTUAL LEARNERS MAY ENJOY
Keeping hands still, Succeeding without teacher approval , Working in a sterile environment, Working in groups that do not include friends , Succeeding without lots of sensory stimuli and the opportunity to touch and feel, Engaging in activities that do not involve manipulatives .		Working with manipulatives, Hands-on science experiments , Cooperative learning activities , Small group interactions , Personal expression, such as sharing time and journal writing, Fine motor skills activities , Art activities , Building and model making , Peer teaching , Discussion of emotional issues .

AUDITORY LEARNERS MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY		AUDITORY LEARNERS MAY ENJOY
<p>Forming letters in primary grades,  Remembering faces,  Reading silently for prolonged periods of time,  Following written directions,  Taking timed tests that must be read and written,  Learning in an environment with enforced silence,  Concentrating when background noises or music sounds are present,  Seeing significant details.</p>		<p>Phonetic approach to spelling,  Listening to oral instructions,  Lectures,  Student speeches,  Audiotapes,  Dialogues and debates,  Socratic seminars,  Paraphrasing,  Storytelling,  Reading aloud,  Music, raps, and sound effects,  Auditory repetition,  Word games, such as puns and palindromes.</p>
VISUAL LEARNERS MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY		VISUAL LEARNERS MAY ENJOY
<p>Sounding out words,  Following oral directions,  Working in an environment with noise or movement,  Listening to lectures without visual pictures or graphics,  Working in a classroom with no decorations,  Working in a classroom with too much visual stimulation.</p>		<p>Reading, graphic organizers, handwriting,  which is usually neat and well spaced,  Writing and note-taking assignments  Visual arts, such as painting and collages  Demonstrations and observations, Telescopes, microscopes, and binoculars  Videotapes, slides, photos, movies, and optical illusions,  Visualizations and guided imagery, Mind maps and visual organizers,  Computer graphics.</p>

*Environmental preferences* are the conditions under which a given student works best. Does a learner do his best thinking in the morning or afternoon? Does this learner become distracted when the classroom is too warm or too cold? When a learner is struggling to read, does he do better in a hard, straight-backed chair or when he is lounging on a soft pillow on the floor?

*Grouping preferences* refer to a student's favoured interaction—working alone, with a partner, in a small group, or in a large group.

**Production styles.** Allied closely with learning styles, production styles are preferred ways of expressing learning, including through speech, through written language, and through various visual modes. For example, an easily managed model of production styles might ask students to self-select into four different groups: writers, performers, builders, and artists. The students would then be given a learning task that corresponds to their preferred mode of expressing their learning.

Several years ago, Susan Baum and Hank Nichols led a workshop on differentiated instruction at the International School of Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. They asked the entire teaching staff to take a quick individual inventory of their preferred and nonpreferred production styles. The teachers were then grouped together in their *least-preferred* production style and given the following simulation task: *Design a product that shows the social and economic structure of a medieval European town, illustrating the relationships between economic classes and different forms of power and authority.* As you might predict, the products were awkward, unrefined, and lacking precision. The participants were also noticeably frustrated.

Susan and Hank then regrouped the teachers into their *most-preferred* production style and assigned the same learning task. The new products showed richness and creativity and a depth of understanding that had been entirely absent in the previous products. Had these teachers reached a greater understanding of medieval Europe in the previous half hour? Perhaps, but we suspect not. We suggest that there is a positive correlation between the complexity and sophistication of understanding and learning that a student can demonstrate and the degree to which he or she is permitted to use a preferred production style. We know that the anxiety and stress of being compelled to work in one's least-preferred production style can actually serve as an obstacle to cognition. The medium does affect the message.

Another significant learning that emerged from Susan and Hank's workshop was that teachers tend to be profoundly suspicious of their own *least-preferred* production style. We heard a number of teachers express concern that it was simply not possible to demonstrate the depth of understanding in building, for example, that you could in writing an essay. Another teacher dismissed a visual representation of knowledge (e.g., a poster) as a "soft option." However, when evaluated objectively against a precise and common rubric, each of these production styles can yield products that are rich in conceptual understanding. We, as teachers, need to be aware of our own learning prejudices.

Allowing student choice is a powerful learning tool, but it's an approach that can sometimes get out of hand and actually impair learning. Carolyn Brunner, the director of the International Centre for Learning Styles at SUNY—Buffalo, sets out three non negotiables students must follow if they wish to alter planned activities in order to use their preferred learning styles: (1) the student's grades must either remain the same (if they are already acceptable or good) or improve; (2) the student's behaviour must remain constructive and appropriate (if it is already so) or it must improve; and (3) the student's use of the preferred learning style must not interfere with anyone else's learning (Brunner, 1994).

## Section 2 Common Learning Strategies.

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**Learning Strategies** are the specific actions, activities and/or techniques a learner uses in order to learn. These techniques used by learners help them make their learning be more effective and to increase their independence and autonomy as learners. Strategies can be employed by learners to assist with the storage of information, to help with the construction of language rules and to help with an appropriate attitude towards the learning situation. The term is applied to the various behaviours or techniques that learners use to learn. Some are consciously employed, and others are automatic. As mentioned above, most learning styles are expressed by observable learning strategy behaviours. In a nutshell, learning strategies are:

Things we do;

Relatively easy to change;

Different, depending on our learning styles;

Effective or not effective for specific situations; and frequently under some level of conscious control.

Some learning strategies will be specific to each of the four skills. The receptive skills of reading and listening can share certain strategies, as can the productive skills of speaking and writing. Let's look at some concrete examples of learning styles in each of these areas:

Comprehension/receptive strategies can include such things as using background knowledge, analysing word parts, using context, asking for help, using a dictionary, and the like.

Production strategies can include such things as adhering to the known, paraphrasing, using an authentic text as a guide, asking for help, using a dictionary, rehearsal, and the like. The classroom instruction on learning strategies with integrative language skills can facilitate learning. (O'Malley et al. 1985a: 577).

For example, Cohen (cited in Oxford 1985a) lists six *strategies* used by successful language learners:

1. - Attention-enhancing strategies, such as responding silently to tasks asked of other students in class.



2. - Use of a variety of background sources, including knowledge of the world, knowledge of the given topic, awareness of stress and tone of voice of the speaker, perception of the speaker's body language, and cues from earlier parts of the conversation in the effort to decode communicative meaning.

4. - Vocabulary learning techniques, such as making associations, attending to the meaning of parts of the word, noting the structure of the word, placing the word in a topical group with similar words, visualizing or contextualizing it, linking it to the situation in which it appears, creating a mental image of it, and associating some physical sensation of it.

5.- Reading or text-processing strategies, such as clarifying the communicative purpose of the text, distinguishing important points from trivia, skipping around to get an overall conceptual picture, using substantive and linguistic background knowledge, reading in broad phrases rather than word, relying on contextual clues, making ongoing summaries, and looking for emphasis and cohesion markers in the text.

6.- Writing techniques such as focusing on simply getting ideas down on paper instead of trying for perfection right away; purposely using parallel structures and other means of enhancing cohesion; and writing multiple drafts.

Strategic thinking can make an enormous difference to learning success, especially outside the classroom, where there is much less direction. The key to strategic thinking is metacognition (cognition is thinking, and metacognition is thinking about thinking). Metacognition for strategy use includes such things as monitoring, evaluating, and refining your use of strategies and deliberately selecting appropriate strategies for specific tasks. Other metacognitive strategies include planning and rewarding oneself for specific kinds of progress.

In the book *Achieving Success in Second Language Acquisition* of the authors Betty Lou Leaver, Madeline Ehrman, and Boris Shekhtman it's made the next description of Learner strategies:

### **Strategic competence**

Strategic competence is the ability to select the appropriate learning strategies for the learning or communicative situation in which you find yourself. There are two ways of looking at strategic competence. One is from the point of view of learning; the other is from the point of view of communication. From the point of view of learning, we talk about learning strategies – those actions that help you to learn more effectively (see, e.g., Chamot and O'Malley, 1994; Chavarriaga-Doak, 1999; Messick, 1984; Oxford, 1990; Schmeck, 1988). From the point of view of communication, we talk about communication strategies – those actions that help you manage when you do not understand something or do not know how to express something, i.e. to cope with new and unfamiliar linguistic situations (Canale and Swain, 1980; chapter 10, this volume). In the case of both learning strategies

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and communication strategies, strategic competence refers to (1) being able to deal with situations where you are in over your head, and/or (2) taking control of your learning and linguistic behaviour. The first kind of strategic competence is very important at lower levels of proficiency; the second kind is more important at higher levels of foreign-language proficiency.

### **Taxonomies**

There are countless learning strategies, so many people find that it is helpful to group them when thinking about them or learning to use them. Over time, a number of different taxonomies (groupings) of learning and communication strategies have been suggested; some samples are given in Appendix B, along with information about tests to determine learning/communication strategy use. We suggest that you use one of these tests to see what learning strategies you are now using. Test results will tell you whether you have a wide set or a limited set of strategies; if the latter, you might want to think about trying out new strategies. Whether or not your strategy use is appropriate for your learning tasks will be determined through one of two means: (1) your success (or lack of it) in completing the task and (2) your teacher's observation of your strategy use.

Some taxonomies contain purely learning strategies; others combine learning and communication strategies. Taxonomies per se are of most interest to theorists and researchers. For you, the most important things are knowing about the strategies that are listed in each of them, using a variety of strategies in your language-learning endeavours, and selecting the one(s) that is/are most appropriate for any given learning task. The research on the "good language learner" (Naiman, 1984; Frohlich, et al., 1978; Rubin and Thompson, 1994; Stern, 1975) indicates that the number of overall strategies used in learning a new language is less important than that the proper strategies be chosen for each task.

### **Deep strategies and surface strategies**

Research (Schmeck, 1988) has shown that the most effective such strategies are what are called deep strategies. The opposite of deep strategies is surface strategies.

Deep strategies make connections among things: unknown to known, among unknowns, new connections among knowns. These activities normally involve investment of personal energy and attention and thus impose something of an additional cognitive load. Examples of deep strategies include making associations among concepts, elaboration (making more of something than what you initially received, such as turning a sentence like The house is on the corner into The white house with green blinds is on the corner of Main and Prospect), and reconceptualizing into hierarchies or diagrams.

Surface strategies do not make much of an investment in the material being learned. They are of a "just get it done" nature. Although they tend to be less useful for bringing material into long-term memory, they can be very helpful when there is something that needs to be dealt with in the short

term. Rote memory is often a surface approach, because it may not make use of connections to other things. Reading through word lists without much thinking about the contents can also be a surface approach.

Use of deep strategies means more time spent on study while the associations and elaborations are made, but it is an investment with long-term payoff. Let's look at what happens now in a classroom setting. The teacher assigns a reading; it has twenty-five new words, and there is a word list that follows that translates each word into English. As you read the article, you look back at the word list. That is a surface strategy. Later, you learn that your teacher might give you a quiz, and you are worried about knowing these twenty-five words, so you spend a half-hour memorizing the word list by first covering up the English and telling yourself the meaning of the word and then covering up the foreign word and, using the English as a prompt, writing it down. These are also surface strategies.

### **Comprehension strategies**

Comprehension strategies are used when you need to understand something that has been said or written. Perhaps there are new expressions in a text. You can use a number of strategies to understand them. You can guess their meaning from context; this is more instinctive for inductive learners. You can break the words apart and see if you can analyse their meaning; this is more natural for ectenic learners. You can apply background knowledge of the topic to determine what the limits on the range of possible definitions of these words would be; this is a naturally synoptic strategy. You could also look up the word in the dictionary – something that an ectenic learner is more likely to do than a synoptic one. These are all cognitive strategies. You could use social strategies, too. Appealing for assistance from a teacher or a peer is just such a social strategy. The taxonomies in Appendix B contain a number of comprehension strategies.

### **Production strategies**

Strategies for production are used when you need to say or write something. There are a number of other kinds of strategies that can be used as well. Of those, at lower levels of proficiency, the ones that are most useful will very likely be the compensation strategies – how to communicate when you do not have the words to express what you need to be able to say. One compensation strategy is to substitute similar words that you do know for words that you do not know. A friend of ours lived for a while in Spain with his wife who spoke only a little Spanish. He tells the story of her needing to buy a chicken at the market one day. She wanted the head and feet to be cut off, but she did not know the right words, so she asked the seller to please remove the chicken's hat and shoes. He understood – and told this funny story to his friends. This was a compensation strategy. In the case of analytic strategies, one might use description in lieu of a specific, unknown word. For example, if someone wants to buy a nail file, he or she might ask for the long, sharp thing for nails. One of the authors did just that in a foreign country recently – and learned the word for nail file in the process.

## Section 3 Maturity

## **Maturity.**

This aspect occurs when learners have different learning characteristics when they grow up physically, mentally and emotionally, so therefore for those characteristics they learn in different ways. According to the author Jeremy Harmer in his book named "The practice of English Language" the maturity is described like differences in age: young learners, adolescents and adults. In my own point of view, I consider the division of maturity according to age of learners can be: young learners (1-5 years old), older children (6-12 years old), teenagers (13-19 years old), young adults (+20) and adult learners (+40).

### **Young learners (1-5 years old).**

Harmer describes young learner abilities in the next way:

They respond to meaning even if they do not understand individual words.

They often learn indirectly rather than directly-that is they take in information from all sides, learning from everything around them rather than only focusing on the precise topic they are being taught.

Their understanding comes not just from explanation, but also from what they see and hear and, crucially, have a chance to touch and interact with.

They generally display an enthusiasm for learning and a curiosity about the world around them.

They have a need for individual attention and approval from the teacher.

They are keen to talk about themselves and respond well to learning that uses themselves and their own lives as main topics in the classroom.

They have a limited attention span; unless activities are extremely engaging they can easily get bored, losing interest after ten minutes or so.

### **Older children (6-12 years old).**

Older children often (but not always) have a wide range of willingness to listen, to experiment things by themselves, to ask questions and to think about how to learn. i.e. They think about the best way to read a text, the best method of drafting a piece of writing, they try things out and see how it works.

### **Teenagers (13-19 years old).**

One of the greatest differences between adolescents and young children is that these older children have developed a greater capacity for abstract thought as they have grown up. In other words, their intellects are kicking in, and they can talk about more abstract ideas, teasing out concepts in a way that younger children find difficult. Many adolescents readily understand and accept the need for learning of a more intellectual type. At their best, adolescent students have a great capacity for learning, enormous potential for creative thought and a passionate commitment to things which interest them. Adolescence is bound up with a search for identity and a need for self-esteem. This is often the result of the students' position within their peer group rather than being the consequence of teacher approval.

### **Young adults.**

### **Adult learners.**

Older learners often (but not always) have a wider range of life experiences to draw on, both as individuals and as learners, than younger students do. They are often more disciplined than adolescents and apply themselves to the task of learning even when it seems fairly boring. They often have a clear understanding of why they are learning things, and can sustain their motivation (see pages 20-21) by perceiving (and holding on to) long-term learning goals.

On the other hand, adult learners come with a lot of previous learning experience which may hamper their progress. Students who have had negative learning experiences in the past may be nervous of new learning. Students used to failure may be consciously or subconsciously prepared for more failure. Older students who have got out of the habit of study may find classrooms daunting places. They may also have strong views about teaching methods from their past, which the teacher will have to take into account.

Because students at different ages have different characteristics, the way we teach them will differ too. With younger children we may offer a greater variety of games, songs and puzzles than we would do with older students. We may want to ensure that there are more frequent changes of activity. With a group of adolescents we will try to keep in mind the importance of a student's place within his or her peer group and take special care when correcting or assigning roles within an activity, etc. Our choice of topics will reflect their emerging interests.

One of the recurring nightmares for teachers of adolescents, in particular, is that we might lose control of the class. We worry about lessons that slip away from us, and which we can't manage because the students don't like the subject, each other, the teacher or the school - or sometimes just because they feel like misbehaving, or because issues in their life outside the classroom are affecting their behaviour and outlook on life. Yet

teenagers are not the only students who sometimes exhibit problem behaviour (that is behaviour which causes a problem for the teacher, the student him- or herself, and, perhaps, the others in the classroom). Younger children can, of course, cause difficulties for the teacher and class, too. Adults can also be disruptive and exhausting. They may not do it in the same way as younger learners, but teachers of adults can experience a range of behaviours such as students who resist the teacher's attempts to focus their attention on the topic of the lesson and spend the lesson talking to their neighbours, or who disagree vocally with much of what the teacher or their classmates are saying. They may arrive late for class or fail to do any homework. And, whatever the causes of this behaviour, a problem is created. Teachers need to work both to prevent problem behaviour, and to respond to it appropriately if it occurs.



# Section 4 Past Language Learning Experiences.

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### **Past Language Learning Experiences.**

Teenage and adult learners may have learnt English before. They may be used to learning in a particular way and have definite ideas how to learn best. For example, an adult may have learn English at school through learning lots of grammar and may have been successful in learning this way. If he then finds himself in a class where the reaching is done just through asking learners to use language for communication, he may not like learning in this new way. Another adult may have learnt by using translation at school and then come to a class in which translation is never used. She may or may not like this change. Teachers of adults (and sometimes teachers of teenagers) need to be aware of how their learners have learnt previously and how they want to learn now. The learners may welcome a change in method but they may want to learn in the same way as they learnt before. Teachers may need to discuss and explain their methods to learners who are unhappy with new methods. They may also need to change their teaching to make the learner more comfortable and confident in their learning if it is possible and needed. Even if students come from similar learning backgrounds it can be useful to get them to recall previous learning experiences. As well as reminding students of their past learning experiences the feedback from students can give you useful information to help your own planning.

**First step: Consider the adaptability of the new learner/s and flexibility of the role of the teacher as factors of success in the planning of the learning process.**

### **Second step: Establishing objectives and goals for planning.**

Having thought about past learning experiences that students have had, it is a good time to think about objectives for the coming year. While this can also be done unit by unit, the start of a course is a good time for learners to think about their priorities and needs. Having consulted students at the beginning of the year, their needs can be taken into account in course planning throughout the year. For example, if you find that students are particularly interested in a certain topic it may be possible to relate a task-based unit or project to it.

#### **Setting objectives**

Give your students a list with some of your objectives for the coming year. Tell them individually to choose five priorities for themselves (eg listening to stories/speaking about likes). If they like they can add other objectives (particularly in terms of topic areas to cover). They can hand these in to you individually or discuss their answers in groups and then report them back to the rest of the class.

**Objectives (elementary level)**

**Topic areas**

Speaking: Using English in the classroom talking about ....

Listening: Getting used to listening without understanding everything listening to stories, conversations, cartoons.

Reading: Getting used to understanding the general idea reading teenage magazines, comics, simplified readers using dictionaries.

Writing: Planning and organising writing different kinds of texts. (postcards, penfriends, etc.)

Grammar: Revision and introduction of basic tenses: present simple present continuous, past simple, future.

Vocabulary: related to the topics (food, family, etc).

Pronunciation: Difficult sounds

Learning: Organising vocabulary, books, self-assessment

As well as looking at overall course objectives, the objectives of particular modules or units can be looked at throughout the course. Before beginning a new module you can inform students of the most important aims and encourage them to think about which are most useful to them. Then, when students have finished the module they will be able to look back and decide to what degree the objectives have been achieved. At the end of the course they will then be able to refer back to them to assess whether they have reached them or not. In this way awareness of initial goals is an important step in the development of assessment.

# Section 5. How Learner characteristics affect Learning.

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## Section 5. How Learner characteristics affect Learning.

	<b>Children</b>	<b>Teenager</b>	<b>Adults</b>
<b>Attention span</b>	Can concentrate for shorter periods.	Concentration is developing.	Can concentrate for longer periods.
<b>Behaviour</b>	Are not able to control and plan their behaviour.	In this stage it begins to control and plan their own behaviour.	Usually able to control and plan their own behaviour.
<b>Error</b>	Learn through experience.	They begins to learn in abstract ways.	Learn in more abstract ways.
<b>Movement</b>	They need to move.	Teenagers start to keep still for longer periods but still need to move.	Adults are able to keep still for longer periods of time.
<b>Risks</b>	Children are not afraid of making mistakes or taking risks.	Teenagers may worry about what others think of them.	Adults are not so willing to make mistakes or take risks.
<b>Self consciousness</b>	Pay attention to meaning in language.	Pay attention to meaning and increasingly to form.	Pay attention to form and meaning in language.

# Section 6. Practice: Identifying Learning Characteristics

**Practice: Identifying Learning Characteristics.**

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